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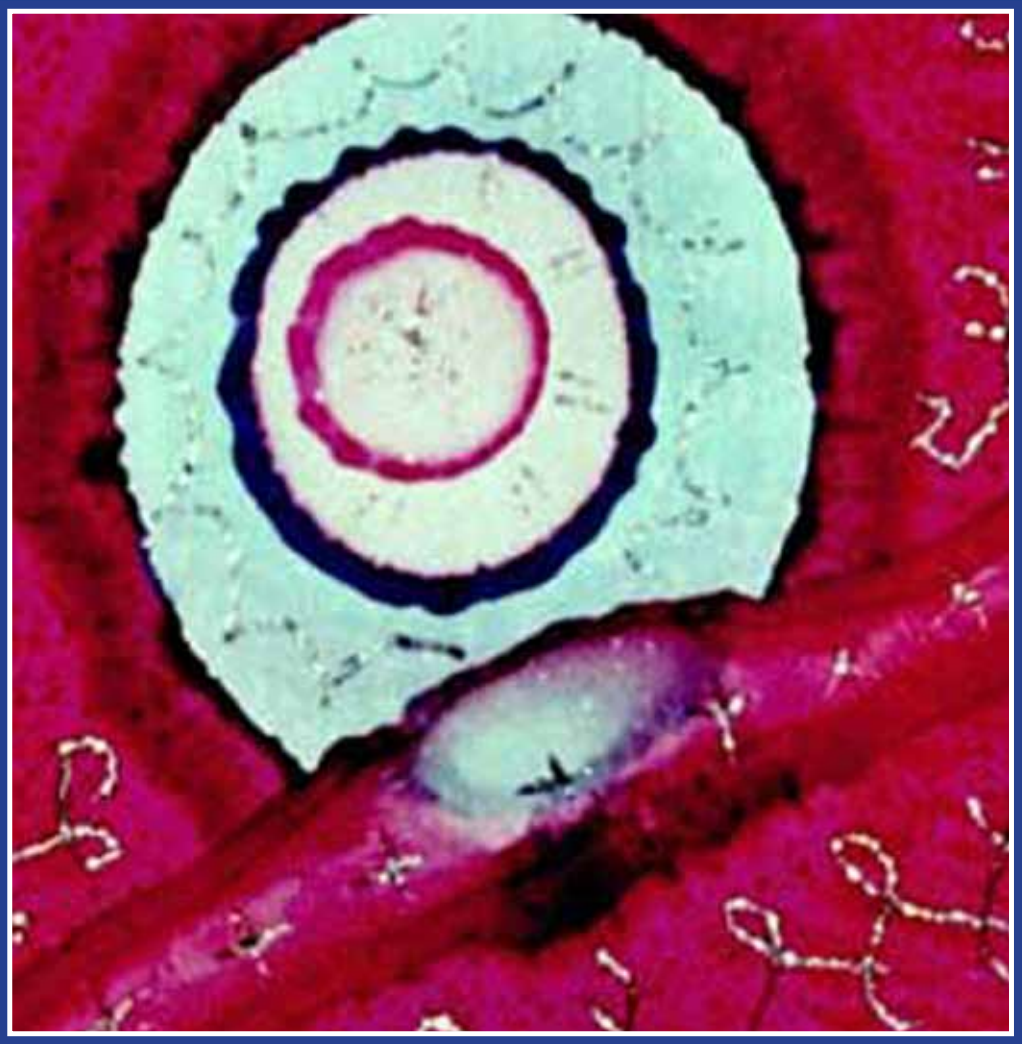
MEMORY AND HISTORY



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MEMORY AND HISTORY

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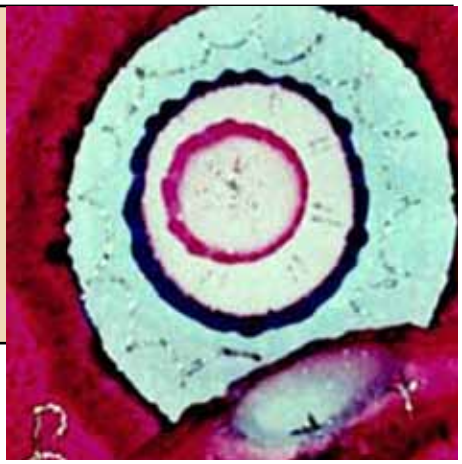
THIS ISSUE WAS PRODUCED IN PARTNERSHIP WITH UNESCO'S MEMORY OF THE WORLD PROGRAMME.



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From the animated film "Begone Dull Care" by Norman McLaren (Canada) whose film « Neighbours » was inscribed on UNESCO's Memory of the World Register this year.

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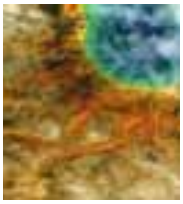

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THE MAN WHO DISCOVERED THE ARCHIVES OF TERROR

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Police record for Martín Almada, a prisoner of Alfredo Stroessner's dictatorship (1974 – 1977), found in the Paraguay police and military forces archives on 22 December 1992.

On 22 December 1992, a Paraguayan, Martín Almada, discovered three tons of documents in a police station. They turned out to be the archives of Operation Condor, which confirmed the crimes carried out in the 1970s and 1980s by the six dictatorships of the Southern Cone of Latin America. A former UNESCO colleague looks back.

During the 1960s I was director of a primary and secondary school in the suburbs of San Lorenzo (Paraguay). My wife, Celestina Pérez, and I lived in accommodations provided by the Juan Bautista Alberdi Institute, named after the Argentinean lawyer who had defended Paraguayan interests following the devastating conflict of 1870. Our once well-educated and prosperous country had never recovered. So much so that, in 1954, the military dictatorship of General Alfredo Stroessner, undoubtedly the most savage in the entire Southern Cone of Latin America, descended on us.

We carried on our work as educators against a backdrop of permanent siege and the suspension of civil and political freedoms, looking to the Brazilian Paulo Freire for inspiration on the pedagogy of the oppressed. For us, school was the antechamber of democracy.

When I was elected president of the Association of School Teachers, my colleagues and I launched a campaign entitled "A roof for every Paraguayan teacher", because primary teachers were in dire need of housing. In 1965, we built a cooperative teachers' residence in San Lorenzo called Villa del maestro. In the 1970s, I was able to take up my studies again in Argentina, at La Plata University, with a scholarship from the Argentinean government. I submitted a thesis on educational science, specializing in educational policy, on the theme of "Paraguay, Education and Dependency", which argued that, in my country, education only helped the ruling classes, and that it perpetuated underdevelopment and subjugation. I was the first Paraguayan to receive a PhD in educational science.

When I went back to Paraguay in November 1974, I was immediately arrested and brought before an Operation Condor military tribunal, where Paraguayan officials sat next to Argentinean, Brazilian, Bolivian, Chilean and Uruguayan military attachés. For 30 days I was subjected to barbaric torture, based on "scientific" techniques taught at the School of the Americas in the Panama Canal Zone [a zone controlled by the USA from 1903 to 1979].

I was accused of "intellectual terrorism" for my education work and for having demanded a decent salary and housing for teachers.

Meanwhile, Celestina was put under house arrest at the school. For ten days the political police called her and made her listen to my shouting and crying. On the tenth day, at midnight, they told her, coldly, that the "subversive educator" had died, asking her to come and collect the body. This news proved fatal and Celestina died in December 1974.

After three years in a detention centre, I was transferred, for "misconduct" – I had taught my cellmates to read – to the Emboscada concentration camp, 45 km from Asunción. I went on hunger strike for 30 days. Thanks to the energetic intervention of the Committee of Paraguayan Churches (CIPAE) and Amnesty International, I was conditionally released in September 1977. But the freedom was only relative – I was re-arrested in November and interrogated at the infamous Technical Section of the Ministry of the Interior. This "elementary school" for assassins operated without interruption from 1956 to 1992.

An exile at UNESCO

The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) then negotiated political refugee status for me in Panama, where the government backed my application for a post in Paris as education consultant for Latin America, in November

HUMAN RIGHTS ARCHIVES IN CAMBODIA

© Isabel González Rojo (UNESCO)

Women prisoners at S-21.

THE PLACE WHERE PEOPLE GO IN BUT NEVER COME OUT

Under the Khmer Rouge over 15,000 people were murdered at the infamous "Security Prison 21 (S-21)" at Tuol Sleng. The site has since become a museum and its archives were added this year to the Memory of the World Register.

Shortly after the Khmer Rouge gained power in 1975 they converted an abandoned high school into a prison and interrogation centre. Under the control of Kaing Guek Eav, also known as "Duch", it became known to local workers as konlaenh choul min dael chenhmeaning literally "the place where people go in but never come out." From factory workers, students, academics and monks to high ranking party officials and Westerners, anyone suspected of opposition to the party was detained. Over the four years of its existence only a handful of those who entered came out alive.

Suspects were often brought in with their families, each systematically photographed and documented. Kept under strict regulations, prisoners were shackled to walls or long iron bars and forbidden to speak, kept alive on mere spoonfuls of rice porridge and soup. Under torture they were forced to confess their "crimes" and name their "collaborators". Eventually, they died under torture, succumbed to illness, or were marched to nearby fields to be executed.

While the inmates are long gone, the majority of original documents remain, representing a unique witness to the regime's. atrocities. Over 5000 photographs and 4000 confessions are stored in the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum and its archive, along with biographical records of prisoners, guards and officials and many of the original torture instruments. These are crucial evidence in the current Khmer Rouge trials and are unremitting illustration of one of the worst tragedies of the 20th century.

David Jackman,
UNESCO Courier

© UNESCO
Martín Almada and Federico Mayor, Director-General of UNESCO, just before Almada's return to Paraguay in November 1992.

Martín Almada is laureate of the French Republic Human Rights Award (1997), the Right Livelihood Award (2002) and the Tomas Moro Prize from the Paraguayan Catholic University of Asunción (2007). He is Commander of the Order of May of the Argentine Government..

1978. I went on to join the staff of UNESCO's Education Sector, where I stayed until the end of 1992. I was one of many Latin Americans to come under the protective wing of UNESCO – including Argentineans Julio Cortázar and Juan Gelman, the Bolivian Fernando Laredo, Chileans Mario Leyton and Miguel Núñez, and the Ecuadorian Jorge Adoum.

Reading UNESCO documents made me realize that my campaign was justified and I continue to think that we were right to fight, so that the following recommendation by the then Director-General, Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow, could be applied: "To teach everyone to respect and ensure that others respect, one's own human rights and those of other people, and to be prepared, when necessary, to find the courage to defend them in all circumstances, even the most difficult – such is the most imperative moral duty of our generation."

During the week, I was a Latin American educator working for UNESCO. But at the weekend, for almost fifteen years, I spent my time researching the mystery of Operation Condor in Paraguayan police journals. Father Charles Antoine, then head of the weekly magazine Dial (which published news about Latin America), offered help with methodology and let me use his library outside working hours.

The Paraguayan military dictatorship came to an end in February 1989, and, in December 1992, I went back to live in my own country. Through my research, I was convinced that the archives of Operation Condor could be hidden in three places.

Outcome of the investigation

Martín Almada is laureate of the French Republic Human Rights Award (1997), the Right Livelihood Award (2002) and the Tomas Moro Prize from the Paraguayan Catholic University of Asunción (2007). He is Commander of the Order of May of the Argentine Government.

The new democratic constitution of June 1992 gave us the right to access the files kept on us. I asked Judge José Agustín Fernández for mine. According to the police, there were no such files, and I had never been detained. So I then requested that the police central archives be searched. This was covered extensively in the newspapers.

Then a woman telephoned me: "Professor, the documents you are looking for are not in the central archives, but in a police station in the suburb of Asunción." I invited this woman to come to my office, and she brought a map of the place, saying she wanted to help bring about the return of democracy. I immediately passed the information onto the judge and, a few days later, on 22 December, accompanied by national and foreign journalists, we exhumed three tons of documents – the infamous Operation Condor "Archives of Terror".

They were immediately transferred to the courthouse. We then worked tirelessly to make sure these archives were preserved, while making them available to historians. They played an important role in establishing the Commission of Truth and Justice, which, after four years of hard work (2004-2008), confirmed the crimes carried out by the dictatorship and gave rise to a series of conclusions and recommendations that the democratic government is about to implement.

Human rights organizations, backed by the Paraguayan government, have requested that UNESCO inscribe this entire archive, which I had the honour to rediscover, on the Memory of the World Register. This inscription is crucial because it protects the right of people to their identity and their memory. And protecting memory means making it possible to understand the present and to build the future.

Martín Almada
is head of the Celestina Pérez de Almada Foundation, whose distinguishing characteristic is to associate protection of human rights and protection of the environment. The Foundation was awarded the European Solar Prize in Berlin in 2005.

© All rights reserved
Almada discovering the "Archives of Terror" on 22 December 1992 in Lambaré, a suburb of Asunción (Paraguay).

DOMINICANS RECOVER THEIR MEMORY

© Memorial Museum of Dominican Resistance

Women mourning their dead in the Dominican Republic.

Last century, two successive dictatorships marked the history of the Dominican Republic and were responsible for nearly 60,000 victims. Deathly silence shrouded this period until very recently. Now, the archives recording this tragic past have been inscribed on the Memory of the World Register.

The executioner always kills twice – the second time through silence, said Elie Wiesel, Nobel Peace Prize laureate (1986). This applies perfectly to the Dominican Republic. Sharing a Caribbean island with Haiti, this country was ruled by a savage dictatorship from 1930 to 1961, and then by another, immediately after, until 1996.

Under the first regime, led by General Rafael Leónidas Trujillo Molina, some 50,000 people were killed, tortured or disappeared, according to Dominican historians. No-one disputes this today, but, until a massive effort to gather documents and eye-witness statements over the past five years, these years were shrouded in silence. Even ten years ago, Dominicans were not allowed to utter the word "dictatorship".

"The Dominican people are only just recovering their memory," says Luisa De Peña Díaz, Director of the Memorial Museum of Dominican Resistance in Santo Domingo. To come to terms with the past, she believes, it is necessary to continue to investigate the crimes committed under the Trujillo regime, to list the dead, identify all those who disappeared, and record all the forms of torture that were used. The museum is continuing this work of remembering, since many cases have still not been solved.

Survivors are keen to help, provided that someone will listen. Until the late 1990s,the country had turned a deaf ear to their stories – their families were their only audience. Victims' relatives used to celebrate the dates of attacks against the regime, like 14 June 1960, originating in Cuba, in which every last perpetrator was killed. They would lay a flower on the tomb of the three Mirabal sisters, to commemorate their assassination on 25 November, 1960. These three human rights militants were murdered together, as they visited their husbands in prison. It was only much later that this crime came to the attention of the world. On 17 December 1999, the United Nations General Assembly, in its Resolution 54/134, voted to designate 25 November as International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women.

For years, survivors and those close to them had secretly kept alive the memory of resistance to the regime. In an effort to spread their action beyond their families, while trying to avoid being persecuted themselves, they would set up foundations, often bearing the name of the victims. The first was the "Foundation of widows, sisters, mothers, aunts and cousins".

When a family was persecuted, it would go from house to house carrying whatever documents remained of their missing loved ones, like holy relics. These documents were not just proof of the ignominy

© Memorial Museum of Dominican Resistance

Funeral wake.

of the regime; they also proved that a son, husband, or brother had, indeed, once existed.

Balaguer takes over the Trujillo regime

Trujillo's assassination in 1961 did not bring his regime to an end, however. His successor was none other than Joaquín Balaguer, a former minister and ambassador who had spent 35 years close to the dictator. He promised to initiate transition towards democracy but his regime merely put on a more "presentable" front. Although the first free elections removed him from power in 1962, he returned following a coup d'état and new elections in 1965; he stayed on for twelve years. "A second dictatorship," says Luisa de Peña, "but this time it was legal." Balaguer used the same methods against his opponents – assassinations and torture – as his mentor. Only, this time, the number of victims was smaller. The Memorial Museum estimates 7000 deaths under the Balaguer regime, compared to 50,000 under Trujillo, including the 17,000 Haitians massacred in 1937.

Balaguer did not stand down until 1978, then took over again from 1986 until 1996, when he resigned to put an end to controversy surrounding the conditions of his re-election in 1994. He stood again for the 2000 elections, at the age of 94. In the first round he came third, with 24% of the votes. He died of a heart attack in 2002. An emblematic figure of the last 40 years of the 20th century, he left a heavy imprint on Dominican society.

Up until 1978, Balaguer was able to keep the archives of the Trujillo regime top secret. It was only when he was deposed the first time that this documentary heritage became accessible, testifying to the systematic and massive persecutions, illegal arrests, disappearances, ethnic cleansing, creation of torture centres and murders, ordered by the Trujillo dictatorship. The archives of the Attorney General of the Republic confirm the terrifying repression perpetrated by the State.

Crimes committed abroad are also documented, such as the attempted assassination of the Venezuelan president, Rómulo Betancourt, in 1960; the kidnapping and disappearance in New York of the Basque, Jesús de Galíndez; and the murder of the Spanish writer, José Almoina.

The situation today

Hampered by the two successive dictatorships, this work of remembering only started under the present government. The political will of this government can be explained by its origins – the majority party, the Party for Dominican Liberation (PLD), was set up by Juan Emilio Bosch y Gaviño (1909-2001), the man who won the first free elections held in 1962, before he was deposed a few months later by the army, who put Balaguer in his place. Juan Bosch was opposed to Trujillo from the start. Accused of leading a number of attempts to overthrow the regime, he fled to exile to Cuba in 1937.

It was not until 2007 that his political successor, the incumbent President of the Republic, Leonel Antonio Fernández Reyna, of the PLD, started the process of "memory retrieval", an act that helped him win a second term as president. Having led the country from 1996 to 2000, he won the 2004 elections and was re-elected in 2008.

Luisa de Peña Díaz is delighted with this show of political will. For her, "people have always kept the memories alive, but until there was an official policy to encourage them, there could be no real action."

These actions, above all, involve education and communication, the two main missions of the Memorial Museum, which was created by decree in 2007, as an instrument to "help the Dominican people to retrieve and openly express its memory."

In all, some 150,000 objects and documents have been collected,

© Memorial Museum of Dominican Resistance

Archives at the Museum of Resistance in Santo Domingo.

revealing the way the dictatorships operated, but also the struggle waged by Dominicans for freedom and democracy in their country. The task now is to make them available tothe public, as part of the foundations of a society in which no future dictator will be able to find accomplices. Inscription on the Memory of the World Register of the "Documentary Heritage on the Resistance and Struggle for Human Rights in the Dominican Republic, 1930-1961" is part of this process.

Gabrielle Lorne,
journalist, RFO-A.I.TV. (France)

MEMORIES OF BROKEN DREAMS AND INTACT HOPES

To grasp the complexity of history, it is necessary to confront all types of documents – from personal archives to international collections. The inscription on the Memory of the World Register of the League of Nations Archives (1919-1946) has opened up new perspectives on historiographic research.

© League of Nations archives, UNOG library

Speech by Haile Selassie, emperor of Ethiopia, at the 20th Assembly of the League of Nations (30.06.1935).

The League of Nations emerges in the collective remembrance as a "Boulevard of Broken Dreams", better known for its failures than its successes. The powerlessness of the League in front of the Japanese aggression in Manchuria, Italy's invasion of Abyssinia (Ethiopia), the Spanish Civil War and Germany's annexation of Austria are some examples. Add to this a slight touch of bureaucratic nightmare, as depicted wonderfully and without mercy in Swiss author Albert Cohen's "Belle du Seigneur", and the shining glass palace above Lac Léman seems to float away towards the white mountains in the distant horizon, beyond reality.

All this may be true, but there is more to the story. The history of the League of Nations is also the story of laborious efforts in a wide range of practical and concrete areas of international cooperation. Conferences, intergovernmental committees and groups of experts met in Geneva to discuss topics as diverse as health and social affairs, transport and communications, economic and financial affairs and intellectual cooperation. The Member States ratified more than one hundred conventions. Although the League failed in its primary mission, which was to avoid world war and ensure collective security, it achieved results in developing international technical cooperation.

One of the miracles of archives is that beyond stereotypes and established ideas, they provide evidence, solid ground and inspiration for true historical research, which may eventually change our perceptions of the past.

The archives of the League of Nations, added to the Memory of the World Register in July 2009, represent 2.175 linear meters, approximately 15 million documents. They reflect the political mandate and the activities of the League, such as its work on peaceful solutions to territorial and other disputes through conciliation and arbitration. One successful example is the Swedish-Finnish agreement on the state of the Åland Islands in the Baltic Sea. This was the first European international agreement (1921) concluded directly through the League. The archives of the League of Nations tell the story of the difficult process leading to a solution to this problem.

Successes and failures of the League to reach peaceful settlements to international disputes and its work on other matters relating to peace and security are also reflected in archives on the Mosul dispute between Turkey and Iraq (1926), the Chaco War between Paraguay and Bolivia (1932), armed clashes between Greece and Bulgaria (1925) and investigations on the existence of slavery in Liberia (1930).

The Power of the Record

The most fascinating thing about the League of Nations archives is the incredible variety of issues dealt with in them. International trade in opium and sexual slavery were among the issues, as was the important matter

© League of Nations archives, UNOG library

League of Nations archive photo.

INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS' ARCHIVES

Conscious of the value of their archival holdings some international organizations, such as the United Nations, UNESCO and the ILO, have launched history projects to encourage independent research and critical reflection on their past orientations and actions.

The fruit of 10 years of research, the United Nations Intellectual History Project was achieved in September 2009 with the publication of the 17th volume of the collection, entitled "The ideas of the UN that have changed the world".

In 2004, UNESCO launched the project "The History of UNESCO", to initiate a multidisciplinary critique on the history of the organisation, its goals, activities and past achievements.

The archives services of international organizations are also working together to simplify access to knowledge about their holdings. Together, they have created an electronic "Guide to the archives of international organizations"

J.B.

© Refugees Mixed Archival Group (Nansen Fonds)

Cover of the Nansen Passport for refugees.

of refugees and their resettlement. In the spring of 1920, Fridtjof Nansen - a Norwegian scientist, Arctic explorer and politician - was appointed as League of Nations High Commissioner for Prisoners of War and appointed by the League of Nations to facilitate the repatriation of many prisoners of war. Within two years, Nansen arranged for approximately 450,000 ex-prisoners of war from 26 countries to be returned to their homes. The "Nansen passport" (introduced in 1922) was the first internationally recognized identity card for stateless persons. This very effective work, which changed the life of hundreds of thousands of people, resulted in the settlement of Russian refugees, then Armenian, Assyrian and Greek refugees from Turkey and still later, in the 1930s, refugees from Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia. In this work one finds the roots of what the UNHCR is doing today.

Among other major achievements documented in the archives are the League of Nations Economic and Financial Organisation, which worked for international economic cooperation, the financial reconstruction of Austria and Hungary after World War I and the tremendous work of the League's Health Section, the forerunner to the WHO, with the standardization of vaccines, such as diphtheria, tetanus and tuberculosis.

The archives of international documents also invite the curious researcher to track the roots of ideas and concepts that have become popular and influential. The notion of cultural diversity, for example, is closely related to what in a file of the International Institute for Intellectual Cooperation (agency of the League of Nations whose archives are in the custody of the UNESCO Archives) was called "particularités culturelles" (cultural characteristics). Other United Nations' ideas and notions, which have had a major impact, such as cultural heritage or sustainable development, can also be traced back in archives of international organizations in different parts of the world.

Perspectives

The inclusion of the League of Nations archives in their totality in the Memory of the World Register is a significant event because of the implied recognition of the value of archives of international organizations. It also highlights the importance of preserving archives kept in their integral, original context as part of Humanity's common heritage.

Among the perspectives of the inclusion in the Register are the questions that it raises for historical research: How can the archives of organizations that often aspire to contribute to lofty ideals, including the creation of a Parliament of Man, be brought together with sources at the micro level? History of migration is an example of a topic where consultation of archives and documents at all levels, from the individual to the international, can lead to extremely interesting insights for researchers. Historians are already addressing the challenges of reflecting on the interplay of universality and diversity in transnational relations; how do the local, national, regional and international levels interact? Many different types of archival collections and sources need to be combined to give a better basis for grasping the complexity of history. It is one of the merits of the inclusion of the League of Nations archives in the Memory of the World Register that they and other archives of intergovernmental and international organizations become more visible.

The inclusion of the League of Nations archives will hopefully lead to more attention being given to the archives of other international organizations. Already, the photo and film archives of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) were inscribed in the Register at the same time as the League of Nations archives. These audiovisual archives testify strongly and effectively to the human disaster following the Palestinian exodus and the relief work carried out by the UN. Other archives of international organisations provide evidence on human rights issues, international efforts to combat diseases, labour regulations, children's conditions, intellectual cooperation, press, information and communication history and more or less every other aspect of human life. Just take UNESCO's archives, where more than 10,000 linear meters of archives bear witness to the multifaceted international cooperation on culture, sciences, communication and education.

© UNRWA

Palestinian refugee camp set up by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) on the east bank of the River Jordan.

Jens Boel,
UNESCO's Chief Archivist

Sung since the 5th century, transcribed in about 1200, the medieval epic poem "Song of the Nibelungs" has had a troubled history. It inspired Wagner, Fritz Lang and perhaps Tolkien, but it was also appropriated by Hitler. Its inscription in UNESCO's Memory of the World Register 2009 should help to restore its honour.

REHABILITATION FOR THE "SONG OF THE NIBELUNGS"

© Badische Landesbibliothek

Ute Obhof of the Land Baden-Württemberg Library in Karlsruhe, presenting "Manuscript C" of *the Song of the Nibelungs*.

The word "Nibelungentreue", denoting the unquestioning loyalty unto death displayed by the Nibelungs, tends to have rather negative connotations in German. It is often used to refer to politicians who remain unbendingly loyal to their party– even when the consequences of this are ultimately detrimental.

The term was coined by a chancellor, Bernhard von Bülow, who used it in 1909 in connection with the allegiance of the German empire to Austria-Hungary. And it was precisely this "Nibelungentreue" that culminated, five years later, in the catastrophe of World War I – and ended in Germany's total defeat. Von Bülow himself probably did not realise the portent of his remarks: in the Song of the Nibelungs, too, the heroes all end up dying.

UNESCO has now inscribed the three oldest preserved manuscripts of the medieval epic poem, dating back to the 13th century, in its Memory of the World Register.

The historic roots of the Song of the Nibelungs reach back to the times of the Migration Period, in the 5th century. The Song of the Nibelungs was written some time around 1200 and combined cycles

of sagas which had been passed on orally for centuries. The author of the Song of the Nibelungs is unknown, says Claudia Fabian of the Bavarian State Library. Nor has the very first version been preserved, "but from the manuscripts that have come down to us we can deduce that it must have existed".

One subject covered by the epic poem is the crushing of the Burgundian kingdom by the Romans and the Huns. Scientists believe that the King of the Huns, named Etzel in the manuscript, is in fact the historic emperor Attila, and that the dragon-slayer Siegfried was modelled on the Cheruscan chieftain Arminius. The latter led the Germanic tribes against the Romans and inflicted a devastating defeat upon the occupying forces in the year AD 9 in the legendary Varus Battle. Never again did the Romans manage to bring the Germanic tribes completely under their control. The dragon Fafnir, slain by Siegfried, who afterwards bathed in its blood in order to become invulnerable, is thought to symbolise the Roman occupiers.

Nevertheless, the Song of the Nibelungs is not a historic document. Ute Obhof, who looks after the manuscript in the Regional Library of the State of Baden in Karlsruhe, notes: "It brings together various different events and persons from different periods." The other two manuscripts are located in the Bavarian State Library in Munich and in the Abbey Library in the Swiss town of St. Gallen. The abbey itself was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1983.

Thrilling stuff, and yet it sunk into oblivion in the 16th century. We can only speculate about the reasons: Claudia Fabian speculates that "perhaps it simply didn't agree with the popular taste at the time."

It was not until 1755 that it was resurrected, when one of the manuscripts was rediscovered by accident. This time, it struck a strong chord with the awakening national sentiments of the German people,

© The Arni Magnusson Institute for Icelandic Studies

Testimonial letter written on vellum by Bishop Jon Eiriksson (1358-1390) with his seal (left).

ARNAMAGNÆAN MANUSCRIPT COLLECTION

A life's collection of early Scandinavian manuscripts, including Icelandic sagas of Viking explorations to North America and mythological poems have been added to the Memory of the World Register this year.

The Icelandic scholar Arnas Magnæus (1663-1730) devoted himself to building up what is now regarded as the world's most important collection of early Scandinavian manuscripts. Moving to Denmark at the age of twenty to study at the University of Copenhagen, Magnæus began to collect principally Icelandic, but also Danish, Norwegian and Swedish historical texts. The collection grew throughout his career as secretary of the Royal Archives and professor of Danish Antiquities at the University until the Great fire of Copenhagen in 1728 which destroyed many of his printed books. Upon his death, a short time after, he bequeathed his life's work to the University, along with an endowment from his private estate.

The collection consists of almost 3 000 items, the most important of which portray the birth and growth of the Icelandic people. Dating as far back as the 12th century the collection contains many of the unique Icelandic narrative – the legendary sagas. Tales of Viking conquest and adventure to the shores of Greenland and North America are widely considered some of the world's most significant literature and express the emergence of a distinct identity. They also illuminate the transition from pagan Nordic beliefs to Christianity and the tensions that heathendom brought to Rome. Other works such as Landnámabók, (The Book of Settlement) and Íslendingabók, (The Book of Icelanders) represent a country solidifying its sense of origins and place in explaining the development of law and governing institutions.

The collection is also unique for another reason. Even before constitutional separation from Denmark in 1944 Iceland had began petitioning for the return of many of the manuscripts which represent an invaluable part of their cultural heritage. In 1965 the Danish Parliament agreed to divide the collection in two, with just over half (1666 items) moving to the University of Iceland. By 1997 the transfer had taken place exemplifying a successful dispute resolution over cultural treasures..

David Jackman,
The UNESCO Courier

who built it up into a national epic. Romantic painters a little later regarded it as the rediscovery of the Middle Ages and the germ cell of the Germanic identity. Goethe, too, was extremely taken by the drama about the dragon slayer; and the poet Friedrich Hebbel based his play "The Nibelungs" on it in 1861. It serves as the foundation for several dramatic productions, as well as the Nibelungen Festival, held annually in Worms since 2002.

Art as propaganda

The story, however, has repeatedly been instrumentalised for political ends too. Fundamental German virtues could allegedly be identified in the invulnerable dragon slayer Siegfried, the Burgundy king Gunther, the sly Hagen, the beautiful and vindictive Kriemhild and the strong Brunhilde. More than anything, the story served as a screen on which the increasingly pronounced national aspirations of the Germans could be projected – initially in response to their oppression by Napoleon; later in support of the Wilhelminian Empire's ambition to become a major power (1871-1888). And then it was hijacked by the Nazis. Thus in 1943 Hermann Göring drew parallels to the Nibelungs with the intention of motivating the German soldiers surrounded at Stalingrad: "And of all these gigantic battles, Stalingrad now stands out like a huge, monumental structure: the Battle of Stalingrad. One day this will be seen as the greatest heroic battle ever fought in our history. [...] – We know a tremendous, heroic song about an unparalleled battle, called 'The Battle of the Nibelungs'. They too stood in a hall full of fire and flames, and quenched their thirst with their own blood – yet they fought, and fought to the last."

"It was the mutilation of a medieval text", says Ute Obhof. It would seem that Göring did not read the Song of the Nibelungs very carefully, because its tragic end does not make it particularly suitable for generating confidence in an ultimate victory. As we know, the battle of Stalingrad ended in the disastrous defeat of the German army.

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Initial on the manuscript.

The Song of the Nibelungs is not suitable for rousing German patriotism either. It deals with amorous affairs and petty jealousy at the court of the Burgundians, with deceit and murder, and ultimately ends with Kriemhild taking bloody revenge on the murderers of her beloved Siegfried. Apart from this, the story is set in places scattered across all of Europe. The people of the Nibelung are identified in the song as coming from Norway, Brunhilde is the queen of Iceland and Etzel is the leader of the Huns, who resided in what is today Hungary.

So how German is the Song of the Nibelungs anyway?

"It is not really German at all," says Ute Obhof, "it's European". As it is, Germany did not actually exist in its present form in the fifth century. "What does make it German, however, is the fact that it was handed down in the German language."

It was presumably not so much the Song of the Nibelungs itself that led to its becoming so charged with nationalism, Ms Fabian believes. This was promoted in particular by the musical interpretation of the material by the composer Richard Wagner – although that was not in fact the effect he intended. Wagner was in fact more interested in depicting human nature – torn between the competing interests of love and power. Over a period of almost thirty years, Wagner created

a four-part, sixteen-hour magnum opus which he called the "Ring of the Nibelung". It was first staged in 1876, and since 1896 has been performed regularly in Bayreuth.

It is hardly surprising that Hitler, seeing the work as a nationalistic celebration of Germanic ideology, became a permanent visitor of the Bayreuth festival from 1933 onwards. Winifred Wagner, Richard Wagner's daughter-in-law, directed the festival at the time and was also a close friend of the dictator. Even thirty years after the war she would continue to profess a glowing admiration of Hitler.

All this did severe harm to the image of Wagner and the Song of the Nibelungs. And it stuck in people's minds. In one of his films, Woody Allen puts it this way: "I can't listen to that much Wagner. I start getting the urge to conquer Poland."

The Eddas : a universal inspiration

Unfortunately, the medieval epic poem has never been able to free itself entirely from this long period of abuse. The inclusion of the manuscripts in the UNESCO list of cultural heritage could mark an important step in its rehabilitation. Their inscription puts them alongside numerous other German works, including Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, documents from the estate of Goethe and Schiller, a Gutenberg Bible and Fritz Lang's classic silent film "Metropolis".

Fritz Lang would certainly have been pleased by the decision, because he too was fascinated by the medieval heroic epic. Indeed, he was the first to make a film of the story, in 1924. Along with "Metropolis", Lang's five-hour production is considered one of the milestones of silent films.

Richard Wagner's descendants have also done a great deal to shake off the nationalistic connotations of the music. Aside from Bayreuth, a regular Nibelungen Festival has also been held in Worms since 2002 – the town in which most of the story in the Song of the Nibelungs is set.

The festival was revived by Dieter Wedel, and this triggered a comeback on the silver screen too: in 2004, Uli Edel filmed a star-studded new version of the Nibelungs. That too made every effort to avoid any form of German pathos. Perhaps too much so: Edel turned the story into a globalised fantasy fairy tale, which could have taken place anywhere – in Germany, Denmark or the Shire.

This is not entirely surprising either, because the Song of the Nibelungs gives the impression of having had a formative influence on Tolkien's "Lord of the Rings". Although Tolkien denied having copied from it, he did, like Wagner, draw inspiration from Germanic and Norse sagas when writing his epic novel – from the "Edda", for example, a collection of Germanic and Norse epic poems about gods and heroes, which contains parts of the Nibelung legend. So Tolkien's Ring and the Song of the Nibelungs ultimately spring from the same source.

Jens Lubbadeh,
journalist at *Spiegel Online* (Germany), correspondent for *the UNESCO Courier*

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Manuscript of the Song of the Nibelungs, an illumination.

When John Marshall accompanied his father on an expedition to Namibia in 1950, he was just a teenager, and had no idea that he was embarking on the first of many fascinating journeys that would make up his life's work. His six-hour series "A Kalahari Family", the product of five decades of filming, takes us across thousands of years of history.

THE JOHN MARSHALL JU/'HOAN BUSHMAN FILM AND VIDEO COLLECTION, 1950 – 2000

© Smithsonian Institute, Human Studies Film Archives Collection

N!ai, a nine-year-old Ju/'hoansi, holding her little cousin. She is one of the characters in John Marshall's films.

Born on November 12, 1932, John Marshall grew up in Cambridge, Massachusetts and on his family's farm in Peterborough, New Hampshire. Almost as remarkable as the footage he shot is the story of how his entire family, prosperous Bostonians, forged such a close bond with the Ju/'hoansi (prononced "juwansi") Bushmen of the Kalahari, a tribe of hunter-gatherers in the Nyae Nyae region of North-East Namibia, that they returned to Africa again and again.

Marshall first picked up a camera in 1950, at age 18, when he accompanied his father, Laurence Marshall, a top American industrialist, on the first of many expeditions to the Kalahari Desert. The entire family accompanied them on a second trip in 1951, staying for a month and a half. It was a transformative experience for them all – they returned in 1953, staying for a year and a half this time.

Lorna Marshall, an English literature teacher, became an anthropologist only to be able to unravel the intricacies of the Ju'/hoan clan's familial ties. Gaining acclaim in the academic world, Lorna worked on many films, including "First Film," which allows viewers to see some of John Marshall's earliest footage.

John's sister, Elizabeth Marshall Thomas, is the author of several books, including "The Harmless People" and "Warrior Herdsmen," about the Dodoth people of Uganda, whose pastoral life was very different from that of the Ju/'hoansi.

"It's so wonderful that UNESCO has given John the recognition he so richly deserved," Elizabeth Marshall Thomas said on the occasion of the inscription of John Marshall's collection of films into the Memory of the World Register in July of 2009. "But recognition didn't mean as much to him as getting done what he did – he would have produced what he did whether or not he got any recognition at all."

Shattering the myth

Much of Marshall's work focuses on one particular extended family, that of Toma Tsamko. Marshall met Toma under a baobab tree on his first visit to /Gautcha, an area with a large salt pan and a permanent waterhole. It was the start of a mutually enriching relationship, one that would span nearly half a century.

"John fell in love with these people, and once they got to know each other – learning the language so quickly helped – it was like a wonderful dream for him, the hunting trips, and the different way of life. They literally became his family," his wife, Alexandra Eliot Marshall reminisces. "He was never condescending – the way John perceived it, and documented it and lived with it, he never glamorized these people. He told their story with an intimacy that came from years of knowing them, both in good times and bad times, and across four generations of the Ju'/hoansi."

Film archivist Karma Foley, who has worked closely with Marshall and now works on the Collection, describes what it was like to work with the filmmaker. "Working with John was a wonderful experience. It was a very formative time in my life, having just graduated from college, and it was incredible to have the opportunity to work with such rich and beautiful material, and to learn from someone who was so talented and so passionate. John was very demanding of himself and of those who worked with him. He cared about the craft of filmmaking, of course, but he was also keenly aware of the power of the moving image and he felt a great responsibility to represent the Ju/'hoansi accurately. For me, working in video production was very exciting, but working with John, I quickly learned that it was much more than that. He used film as an advocacy tool, he used it to educate. There was a great deal of purpose and commitment behind his work."

Those who worked with Marshall stress that despite his significant aesthetic and theoretical contributions to documentary, he believed that the people in front of the camera were more important than the filmmaker himself. Throughout his career, he battled "the Myth", the popular notion among Westerners that the Bushmen didn't know what was best for them and needed help from "developed" society.

© Smithsonian Institute, Human Studies Film Archives Collection

Toma Tsamko greeting John Marshall, after a long absence, in 1978.

A cinematic activist

Marshall saw himself as a reporter, not a spokesman for the Ju/'hoansi, often allowing them to describe their lives in their own words.

"John was extremely committed to helping the Ju/'hoansi. He basically gave up his filmmaking career in 1980 to do grassroots development and advocacy work in Namibia. He dedicated so much of his life to trying to help," says Foley, who has accompanied Marshall on trips to Africa and returned since. "That kind of commitment is very rare. Personally I think it comes from love, a very deep love and respect that he had for the people he considered his second family. And that's what I see in so much of the footage he shot over all those years - tremen-

© Claire Ritchie

Toma Tsamko (in suit and tie) taking part in a political rally for the SWAPO party before Namibia's first democratic elections. Tsamko was the first president of the Nyae Nyae Farmers' Coop and entered politics in 1980.

dous love and respect."

It was probably due to this close relationship with the Ju/'hoansi that Marshall was forced to leave South West Africa in 1958 after his visa expired, and was not allowed to return for twenty years.

Meanwhile, Marshall became well-established as a cinema vérité filmmaker in the 1960s and 1970s. In 1968, Marshall and American filmmaker Timothy Asch, who had filmed the Yanomamo Indians in Venezuela, founded Documentary Educational Resources, a nonprofit that produces and distributes anthropological films for classroom use.

In 1978 Marshall was allowed to return to Nyae Nyae, only to find his Ju'/hoan friends had lost much of their land to the South African government and could no longer survive as hunters. Virtually abandoning his filmmaking, Marshall started a foundation to bring the Ju/'hoansi closer to self-sufficiency. The fund allowed them to establish water access, learn subsistence farming, and establish a local government.

Marshall's epic five-part series, "A Kalahari Family," is culled from more than a million feet of footage shot between1950-2000. "In the course of six hours, you actually traverse thousands of years of history," says documentary filmmaker Jayasinhji Jhala, associate professor of anthropology at Temple University, Pennsylvania, and a close friend of Marshall's. According to Jhala, there is nothing that remotely compares to this remarkable body of work. Besides being a comprehensive record of the Ju/'hoansi, the series charts Marshall's evolution from filmmaker to activist.

Marshall's final visit to Nyae Nyae was in 2004. He died due to complications from lung cancer in April 2005.

Shiraz Sidhva,
Indian journalist, correspondent for *the UNESCO Courier*

Smithsonian Institute, Human Studies Film Archives Collections

John Marshall in the Nyae Nyae region, 1989.

THE FOUNDING OF ETHNOGRAPHIC FILM

Housed in the Human Studies Film Archives at the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History in Washington DC, the John Marshall Ju/'hoan Bushman Film and Video Collection, 1950 – 2000 was recently added to UNESCO's Memory of the World Register.

he recognition has been welcomed by the Smithsonian's archivists, and colleagues, friends and family of the American anthropologist and acclaimed filmmaker who documented 50 years of the lives of the Ju/'hoansi of the Nyae Nyae (Namibia).

Pamela Wintle, senior film archivist at the Smithsonian's Human Studies Film Archives and a long-time advocate of film preservation, hopes UNESCO's recognition "will raise the profile of this specific archival collection, making it well-known throughout the world, as well as the profile of the Human Studies Film Archives, within both the National Museum of Natural History, and the Smithsonian."

Considered one of the seminal visual anthropological projects of the 20th century, Marshall's work documents the traditional lives of these once-independent hunter-gatherers and their ties to the land. He goes on to record the Ju/'hoansi's fight against dispossession, disease, and war, and their struggle to establish farming communities and reclaim their lands as hope for Namibian independence and the end of apartheid grew.

"The career of John Kennedy Marshall spanned a remarkable 50-plus years during which he became an innovator in the technical production of films as well as a leading voice in the ethics of ethnographic filmmaking," said Jake Homiak, director of the museum's Anthropology Collections and Archives Program. "During his lifelong association with the Ju/'hoansi (Bushmen) he became an advocate for those he documented, using his films as tools for education and empowerment."

The Marshall Collection contains 767 hours of unedited film and video footage, as well as edited films and videos, audio tapes, still photographs, maps, study guides for edited films, published and unpublished writing by Marshall and others. It also houses production files that include letters, shot logs, translations, transcriptions, editing logs, treatments and proposals spanning from 1950 to 2000. The collection also includes several books and numerous journal articles that have been written about Marshall's films and methods.

S. Sidva

For four centuries, the Korean medical encyclopaedia known as Donguibogam has been a source of inspiration for thinkers and artists alike. Its 25 volumes contain a colossal amount of medical knowledge and philosophy along with some unusual prescriptions.

DONGUIBOGAM : PRECIOUS BOOK OF MEDICINE

©The National Library of Korea

Volumes of Donguibogam, considered a classic of Korean culture.

All the traditional medical practices of our country are cited in the Donguibogam and it is also their source. This is how Hwang Kyeong-sik, professor of philosophy at the University of Seoul, began his presentation at an international scientific conference devoted to this exceptional book, held on 3 September 2009. The conference, at Korea's National Library, marked the 400th anniversary of the Donguibogam, which had just been inscribed on the UNESCO Memory of the World Register. It is the first medical text to appear on this prestigious list.

It was compiled by a court physician, Heo Jun (1546-1615), on orders from the king, Seonjo de Joseon. It took 16 years of continuous effort, not even disrupted by a change of reign or the Japanese invasion. Thus was born a genuine medical encyclopaedia in 25 volumes, which has continued to inspire thinkers and artists alike over the centuries.

The Donguibogam is one of the classics of Korean culture. Apart from its value for the medical world, it also offers a philosophical vision of Eastern Asia at the beginning of the 17th century. The underlying message of the encyclopaedia is that it is possible to keep a body in good health by maintaining its energies – which are like those found in nature – in balance. Indeed, it starts with a chapter on cosmology, where the workings of the body are compared to those of the universe.

This principle is still accepted today and continues to spread, thanks to the success of "deep ecology", which considers humanity to be an integral part of the planetary ecosystem. It can trace its origins to Taoism and the concepts of not-acting and not-being. Hoe Jun was convinced that all illnesses arose from an imbalance. For him, the most effective remedy was meditation, not medication.

The pulse, a celestial energy

If the Donguibogam were not useful in healing the sick, its value would have remained limited despite its philosophical interest. Using the teachings of oriental philosophy, the encyclopaedia identifies, classifies and lists all the medicines and medical practices known at the time. In the chapters on pharmacopeia, acupuncture and moxibustion, Hoe Jun describes appropriate treatments in detail. He specifies exactly when during the year to collect a given plant, what to do with it and how long it remains effective.

In the volumes on internal medicine, Heo Jun describes the interactions of the five viscera. "The liver, the lungs, the kidneys, the heart and the spleen all interact with one another," explains Kim Nam-il a re-

"Dry and reduce to a powder the gall bladder of a white dog, a kudzu vine stalk and pinch of cinnamon. Mix all of these together with some honey. Roll the paste into balls. This preparation makes you invisible. The gall bladder of a blue dog is even more effective."

©The National Library of Korea
The original volumes of Donguibogam are kept in the Korean National Library

searcher in oriental medicine at the University of Kyeonghui. "A given organ acts differently according to its links with the other viscera. The Donguibogam explains this principle clearly."

The section on external medicine deals with the five body elements that enable it to maintain its form and capacity for movement: the skin, the muscles, the blood vessels, the tendons and the bones. Here it is explained that the pulse represents celestial energy. In oriental medicine, the pulse is essential. "Taking the pulse" is a time-honoured expression that means "to make a diagnosis". The Donguibogam lists precisely the different methods of taking the pulse and the various interpretations.

©The National Library of Korea
An encyclopaedia of traditional remedies passed down from generation to generation throughout Asia.

Heo Jun devoted 11 volumes to the description of the causes and symptoms of illnesses, as well as the remedies. Among these is a strange illness entitled yukjing : "The patient is tormented by an insatiable hunger for meat. If he is not made to vomit, he will die."

Even more peculiar is a formula in the chapter on Diverse Remedies , which tells us how to make ourselves invisible: "Dry and reduce to a powder the gall bladder of a white dog, a kudzu vine stalk and a pinch of cinnamon. Mix all of these together with some honey. Roll the paste into balls. This preparation makes you invisible. The gall bladder of a blue dog is even more effective."

"The Donguibogam is an excellent treatise, and most of its principles are still valid four centuries after it was written," writes Yi Sang-bong, communications officer for the Association of Practitioners of Oriental medicine (Joseon Ilbo, 29 August, 2009). He adds, "Master Hoe Jun was determined to compile all the popular Korean remedies, without exception," as if to justify the appearance of some that may appear outlandish to us. Yi Sang-bong also suggests interpreting the magic formula for invisibility as a means of practising the way of the heart.

In his encyclopaedia Hoe Jun did indeed present a compilation of the traditional remedies passed down from generation to generation throughout Asia, and especially China. But he was not shy of expressing his own convictions and experiences as a doctor. The title of the work is, itself, an expression of his libertarian spirit: literally, the word Donguibogam designates a precious book on oriental medicine, objective and independent.

An accessible treasure

Heo Jun's wisdom and art, as well as his colourful life, have inspired generations of artists in South Korea. The novel by Yi Eunseong, entitled Donguibogam, was a great success, as was its adaptation into a television soap opera. "This is not most people's idea of what it means to be a doctor. Most doctors are proud of their art and how it relieves the sufferings of their patients, but hardly any of them write down the treatments they use for the guidance of future generations. Unfortunately," writes Yi Eunseong in his novel.

The Korean National Library, which holds the original edition of Donguibogam, is producing an annotated translation into modern Korean. And, from 1 to 25 September 2009, it put on an exhibition entitled The Donguibogam in Words and Images . "We showed 176 works of literature and art centred on the original edition of this work, which appeared in 1613 and is now inscribed on the UNESCO Memory of the World Register," explains Mo Taek-min, head of the Library.

But what makes the Donguibogam so precious is not just to be found in the display cabinets of the National Library. It has also given us, in the 21st century, access to the oriental worldview at the beginning of the 17th century, people's daily lives at the time, and Asian popular medicine. The work builds a bridge from the present to the past. Often we are oblivious to readily available marvels. Fortunately, this one has not escaped our notice.

Yeon Kyung,

The Royal Archives of Madagascar, written in Malagasy, are a unique, living testimony of daily life in the 19th century and the meeting of two cultures, as seen by Malagasy people themselves. In July 2009, the Archives were inscribed on the UNESCO Memory of the World register.

© Hery Rakotondrazaka/L'Express de Madagascar

These royal archives are not available to the public.

IN THE BLUE INK OF MALAGASY ARISTOCRATS

Time has started to yellow the pages and the blue ink is already fading. A few letters have gone, leaving some words missing a vowel or a consonant. But overall the text is still legible, and the erratic grammar of the Malagasy language, only beginning to adapt to the Roman alphabet, in no way dulls the pleasure of discovering a whole culture and civilization.

The registers of the village chiefs (sakaizambohitra), as well as the notebooks, records and bound correspondence that comprise the Royal Archives open the door on a whole panorama of daily life. The kingdom of Madagascar began in 1810 and ended in 1897, with French colonization, when the island's new General Governor, Joseph Gallieni, abolished the monarchy. These precious documents, now kept in the main island's National Archives, cover the period from 1824 to 1897. They give an important account of the nascent history of a hitherto oral culture, revealing the secrets and intrigues of the court, as well as the difficulties central government envoys sometimes encountered in the conquered lands.

Until the accession of King Radama I (1810-1828), Madagascar was divided into a multitude of kingdoms. Radama I, from the Merina clan, was recognized by the British as King of Madagascar in 1817. He continued the policy of island unification that his father had initiated in 1795, but with greater openness towards the developed world. He welcomed the Protestant missionaries, who went on to build schools, adapt the Roman alphabet to the Malagasy language and teach the aristocracy to read and write. This is how, from 1824, the first Malagasy archives gradually took form.

History behind the scenes

Did the Prime Minister buy arms without consulting his Cabinet, and even though the State coffers were empty? The Rainilaiarivony Journal –written minutes of the twice-weekly cabinet meetings as transcribed by secretaries – gives a detailed account of how, after failing to secure a loan from the queen and now faced with a 'fait accompli', the government decided to involve the people in the purchase. Since the arms had already been delivered, they had to be paid for somehow! The royal 'kabary' (speeches), which informed subjects of the decision to raise new taxes for the "good of all", are more or less faithfully recorded in the records.

Did the queen appoint a disreputable character as head of criminal justice? Once again, the Rainilaiarivony Journal relates, in full detail, how the cabinet tried to dissuade her from choosing this "womanizer". But management of public affairs is not all that is recorded. There are also references to the private lives of the courtiers in the queen's and the prime minister's palaces. Here we learn, interspersed among more serious debates, how so-and-so got divorced and such-and-such has been cheating on his wife.

And this aspect of court life is not only the preserve of the cabinet records. Essays by erudite Malagasies on the history of the nation, correspondence between provincial governors, and even the

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Sylvie Andriamihamina, Director of the National Archives of Madagascar.

English language exercise books of the Prime Minister, all offer titillating details of the daily life of a Malagasy courtier.

But, besides the gossip, the Royal Archives provide historians, the only ones to have access, with material to better understand life in Madagascar in the 19th century, and not just from the perspective of political history. Thanks to these records, research has been carried out on the costumes, cuisine, lifestyle and festivals of the island. And this insight into the habits of the people also sheds light on the entire social and economic history of the period.

From 'lovan-tsofina' to written archives

These documents are all the more interesting because they reflect the Malagasy point of view on a period which turned out to be crucial for the country, because of its encounter with Western, Christian cultures. With the adopttion of the Roman alphabet, tales of daily life were no longer confined to the lovan-tsofina (oral transmission of traditions and customs) but were also written down. And these written records were not produced only by the foreign missionaries, soldiers and explorers, but also by the Malagasy people themselves.

"The Madagascar Royal Archives provide a very explicit account of the opening of the island to the western world and the contact between the two cultures," explains Sylvie Andriamihamina, Director of the National Archives. And between the two religions. From the 1820s onwards, Protestant missionaries gradually established Christianity. Up until then, Malagasies worshipped their ancestors, seen as mediators between the living and the one god, Zanahary. He was then integrated with the new religious practises and assimilated to the Christian God of the Bible.

The archives are currently held in the Archives of the Republic of Madagascar, in Antananarivo. "They are still very well preserved despite several moves," says Sylvie Andriamihamina. "But we do need to find a way for them to be consulted without damage to the original documents. We have been able to digitize the correspondence between missionaries and the central government, thanks to a partnership with the Centre for Technical and Economic Information (CITE). Other records are available on the Internum Aristhot website." In the interests of conservation, access to the documents is strictly controlled. "Conventions and agreements have been signed with the research departments that want to use them," she adds.

Inscription of the Royal Archives on the UNESCO Memory of the World Register in July 2009 came just at the right time. "Thanks to this inscription, we can learn more about our own heritage and share this with the rest of the world," says Ms Andriamihamina.

Lovasoa Rabary-Rakotondravony and **Isabelle Motchane-Brun,**
L'Express de Madagascar

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Example of Malagasy diplomatic correspondence before French colonisation.

A wall comes down, a world is born

© A. Kourkov

Andrei Kurkov in the apartment where he writes, in Kiev.

An interview to mark the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin wall (9 November 1989), by Katerina Markelova, The UNESCO Courier.

"A country under construction presents the same dangers to its population as a building site does to unsupervised children," declares Andrei Kurkov, a Ukrainian author who writes in Russian and is well-known for his lucid perspective on post-Soviet society. Here he comments on the late 1980s and the Orange Revolution as well as on more current events.

You were quite young when the President Mikhail Gorbachev started his perestroika. Were you aware of the limits imposed by the Soviet regime?

At that age and time, I did not think about limits. There simply existed certain rules which it was better not to transgress. As a student, I wrote black-humoured short stories that I distributed at the university (the Kiev State Pedagogical Institute of Foreign Languages). Which got me a summons from the KGB (Committee for State Security in the former USSR). Someone once told me which one of my acquaintances had written letters denouncing me. Informing in this way was very common at the time and more or less the norm. However, I would not define everything that happened during that time in terms of "limits imposed by the regime".

The universe of your novels often seems unreal and a number of your characters are animals – in Death And The Penguin, for example. Is this a means of expressing your ideas on society without calling things by their real names?

Yes, I think unconsciously, in the Soviet era, I wrote in such a way that no one could accuse me of anything at all. Since the 1990s, however, the settings of my novels have become more real; they are sometimes Kiev, or Ukraine and Russia, or Kazakhstan.

The penguins came to mind because they remind me so much of the Soviets. They are animals that live in groups. One individual, isolated, cannot survive; it loses its sense of orientation. The group, meanwhile, possesses a certain collective conscience. Each new generation takes the same path as the one before. Everything is programmed in these animals and they function according to the programme only when they are together. If you put a penguin on a deserted island, the programme stops.

In 1991, with the breakdown of the Soviet Union and the dissolution of the communist party's hegemony, the programme directing the Soviet people's collective life disappeared too. Individuals found themselves alone and disoriented. They had to get used to their new life, to autonomy, as well as they could.

What did you think about perestroika? Had you imagined such an outcome?

I welcomed Gorbachev with joy. There was a premonition of great change. Andropov was dead along with Chernenko and in their place a young Gorbachev had emerged full of promise for the future. At about that time I was able to publish my first short stories, which had been

rejected previously. I remember that science-fiction, for example, which until then had been scarce, began to proliferate. This meant in a way we had more of a right to dream. So everyone started believing that life would improve. I did too.

The weakening of the State's control was obvious, but I could never have imagined it leading to the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Then, when the collapse began, there was first the economic crisis – the empty shops, the depreciation of the ruble – then simply decomposition and the separation of Ukraine and the USSR. That was when I began to feel mixed emotions. At the same time, I was thinking it was easier to bring order to a small country than to a big country. I don't know why, but I imagined that Ukraine would move quickly into a normal orbit. But… that did not happen.

How did you react to the fall of the Berlin wall?

At first, I was confused! I was afraid that it would end badly. I remember, just before the fall of the wall, Hungary had opened its border with the German Democratic Republic (GDR) and about 10,000 East Germans streamed in, to be part of the Federal Republic of Germany. The future seemed precarious at those moments. Maybe, unconsciously, I was afraid they would trigger a Third World War. But my apprehension quickly dissipated. We could follow the events on television regularly and it became clear that the political system of the GDR was collapsing. And as it was much more solid than the Soviet or the Polish system, it was evident that a new era was approaching.

How have the societies of post-Soviet countries, and particularly Ukrainian society, evolved since the Iron Curtain fell?

In many of my novels I describe how, in 1991, life gained the upper hand over humanity. What I mean is that the rules of life – which until then had been universally accepted by societies – had disappeared and people found themselves tossed by the waves of destiny.

On one hand, the majority of retired people – nostalgic for the Soviet Union – were not willing or able to adapt to the new era. On the other, the people of my generation suddenly threw themselves into activities for which they were not prepared. Life pushed some towards small commercial ventures and others towards crime. For example, I had a classmate who was a good student and who wanted to be a chemist. Suddenly, he became a broker. He worked with money of dubious origin, which got him five years in prison. It is different for the new generation, those born after 1985. Young people have a different mentality because they have not known the suffering of political and social rupture.

All this to say that a country under construction presents the same dangers to its population as a building site does to unsupervised children. The people fall, they bump into things, they're constantly hurting themselves and destroying their destiny.

In addition, immorality in politics was legitimized. In other words, if you are comfortable being dishonest, corrupt, etc. – become a congressman. Politics has been reduced to a dirty business in many countries. We can say that people are going into politics to enrich themselves and not to build the State. That is why the State still seems unfinished. This failure to establish the State is still felt today in Ukraine, although less violently. The time of dividing up power among gangsters is over: intelligent wrongdoers turn to financial crime.

What were you doing during the Orange Revolution, which began in Ukraine in November 2004?

I got involved actively: I spent three weeks in Maidan (Kiev's central square), giving interviews that were broadcast live in Spain, Canada, Germany and England. My writer friends and I organised open debates in the bookshop Nautchnaia mysl (scientific thought) in the centre of the city where followers of both Yanukovych and Yushchenko came to get warm. I do not regret having done that. In any case, what we have today is better than what we had before the Orange Revolution, from a political and moral point of view. Even if now almost all the actors from the revolution are disillusioned because they expected more.

What are the strengths of democracy in the post-Soviet countries and what are the weaknesses?

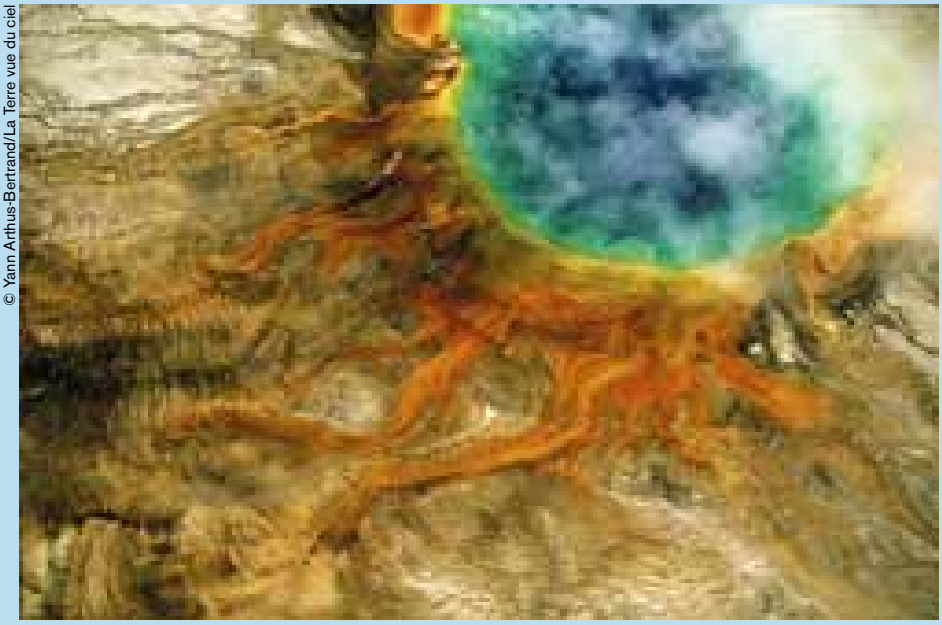
The existence of political pluralism indicates a democracy. But our democracy is more symbolic than real, because behind the political parties, one sees no ideological programmes. These parties are simply groups of representatives of the economic sector united around common interests who call themselves liberal or something else. Occasionally, I have the impression that in Ukraine, despite everything, there is more democracy than in Russia. But on the other hand, when laws are not applied in a country, when a number of rules are missing and no one is striving to establish them, one has reasons to doubt the validity of one's democratic regime. That said, we do have a certain freedom of the press and people can, if they want to, participate in all political actions. That is already great progress.

Andrei Kurkov,
born in 1961 in Russia,
is the author of 15 novels,
nearly half of which have been
translated, as well as seven books
for children. His novel
Death And The Penguin,
published in Ukraine in 1996,
has been translated in 33 languages.

This column, launched by the Foresight Section of UNESCO's Bureau of Strategic Planning, tackles topics of interest to the general public and the Member States of the Organization. It features intellectual opinions likely to foster UNESCO's reflection, programming and action in its various fields of competence.

THE EARTH IN CLOSE-UP

In 2000 UNESCO sponsored Yann Arthus-Bertrand's project Earth from Above featuring his photographs of the world's most beautiful landscapes. It was tremendously successful: 130 million people saw the travelling exhibition and over three million copies of the book were sold in 21 languages. But the experience had no follow up. Will the Organization and the photographer team up again to help the planet?



© Yann Arthus-Bertrand/La Terre vue du ciel

Grand Prismatic Spring, Yellowstone National Park, United States.

Interview by Linda Tinio (UNESCO Bureau of Strategic Planning).

"It is the duty of all of us today to safeguard the planet," says French artist and ecologist Yann Arthus-Bertrand, whose photos of the earth have dazzled viewers around the world. "The human population is steadily rising and biodiversity decreasing. We're ruining the planet's equilibrium. We've tamed the Earth. The Earth is at our service. Animals are at our service. It's as if we still don't realize that we need animals to live, that animals are part of our life, because they're our cousins and we owe them respect."

How does Arthus-Bertrand reconcile art and action? Can a picture be political? "Can art change things?" he asks, smiling. "Of course it can! Otherwise I wouldn't be doing what I do. First, what is art? Am I an artist or a journalist? I use pictures to show what scientists say. I didn't become an ecologist by accident. It happened gradually, over time, by working. And today I'm an activist doing my best to be convincing. I do what I know how to do, which is to make beautiful images, and I enjoy it. But I'm not interested in a beautiful image for its own sake. It has to make people think. I try to give my work meaning."

Since the current financial and economic crisis began, some countries have shifted their orientation to a green economy. What lessons can be drawn from the downturn? "Right now," Arthus-Bertrand says, "it's clear that people in the rich countries must learn to live with less, waste less, eat less meat, throw less away, use less oil. We can live better with less, despite those who think that's a step backwards."

Offset? Tell us more...

To coincide with the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen, the Courier is devoting its December 2009/January 2010 edition to the topic of global climate change.

The debate about carbon taxes has been in the news lately. "Listening to the carbon tax discussions," Arthus-Bertrand says, "you get the impression something is being imposed on people. But on the contrary, people should be proud of paying the carbon tax. They should be thinking, 'I'm helping, too'. When I drive my car I produce CO^2 but at least I pay a tax that will help fight climate change. I admit that I consume carbon, but I try to offset it by raising people's awareness. All the participants in December's World Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen will take a jet to get there. That's a bit ridiculous, isn't it? Let's hope this big meeting will produce results that will offset the amount of carbon they consume."

Is offsetting CO^2 emissions enough to solve the problems? "Offsetting isn't what matters, it's being aware what you consume. When you realise that flying from Paris to New York and back consumes as much carbon as two French people con-

© Yann Arthus-Bertrand/La Terre vue du ciel
Well, Fatehpur Sikri, Uttar Pradesh, India.

© Yann Arthus-Bertrand/La Terre vue du ciel
Pink trumpet tree on Kaw Mountain, French Guiana.

To coincide with the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen, the Courier is devoting its December 2009/January 2010 edition to the topic of global climate change.

sume in a year, you understand something's wrong! I have a lot of faith in individual consciousness. Politicians aren't the ones who have the power to convince people. Even in the democracies, if strong public opinion isn't built up it won't work. Nothing can be imposed by force. You have to convince people – the richest as well as the poorest – that they must change their lifestyles. The UN should launch a campaign to raise the awareness not of politicians but of the world's citizens."

Come work with me!

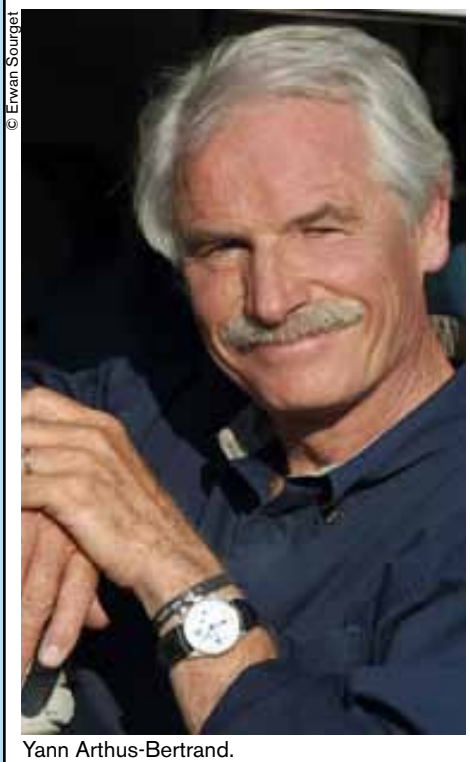
In September 2008 Arthus-Bertrand said, "It's too late to be pessimistic". What did he mean by that? "When you care about the planet and read increasingly gloomy reports every day about the state it's in, you can't help noticing there are two kinds of people in the world: those who fret and those who try to change things. Personally, I want to be on the side of the people who are fighting for change and who believe in it. So it's too late to be pessimistic. The indicators do look rather grim, but we have to move forward."

In 2000 UNESCO sponsored Arthus-Bertrand's project Earth from Above, in which he photographed the world's most beautiful landscapes. It was tremendously successful: 130 million people saw the travelling exhibition and over three million copies of the book were sold in 21 languages. But the experience had no follow up. Would it be worth reviving such a positive collaboration? Arthus-Bertrand is ready for new adventures with UNESCO.

The photographer would like the UN to help with his latest project, Six Billion Others. "It's a subject that really should interest international organizations," he says. Six Billion Others is an exhibition of over 6,000 video testimonials by people around the world talking in their native languages about the issues affecting humanity. The project started in 2003 and was presented at the Grand Palais in Paris in January and February 2009.

His parting words: "Come work with me. Let's set up a big project. We can do terrific things together!" An opportunity not to be missed.

YANN ARTHUS-BERTRAND : SOME PROJECTS


© Erwan Sourget
Yann Arthus-Bertrand.

Yann Arthus-Bertrand, born in 1946, founded the aerial photography agency Altitude in 1991. In 2005 he set up GoodPlanet, a foundation with the aim of raising public awareness concerning environmental issues. It includes six programmes: Six Billion Others, Carbon Action, GoodPlanet Posters, GoodPlanet Junior, GoodPlanet Info and GoodPlanet Conso. In April 2009 the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) appointed him goodwill ambassador. His show Vu du Ciel (Earth From Above), a documentary series about the planet, airs in 34 countries. His film Home, screened in 126 countries on World Environment Day (5 June 2009), illustrates our planet's condition and the challenges that must be met to protect it.

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